

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

1

God has ninety-nine names:

2

one hundred minus one.

3

Whoever learns them all goes to Heaven.

4

Adding in a different narration: He is one and loves oneness.<sup>(1)</sup>

#### From the Qur'an

﴿God has the finest names, so appeal to Him by these and stay away from those who blaspheme against His names. They shall be required for all they do.﴾ (7: 180)

﴿Say, 'Call upon God or call upon the Lord of Grace. By whichever name you invoke Him, His are the most gracious names'.﴾ (17: 110)

﴿He is God: there is no deity other than Him. It is He who knows all that is beyond the reach of anyone's perception, as well as all that which can be witnessed. He is the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful. (22) He is God: there is no deity other than Him, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Giver of Faith, the Guardian over all, the Almighty, the Compeller, to whom all greatness belongs. Exalted is God in His limitless glory above anything they associate as partner with Him. (23) He is God: the Creator, the Maker who gives shape and form to all. His are the most gracious names. Everything in the heavens and earth extols His limitless glory. He alone is the Almighty, the Wise.﴾ (59: 22-24)

#### The Narrator

Most probably Abu Hurayrah's name was 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Dawsī who emanated from a branch of the Azd tribe. He embraced Islam in the year in which the Battle of Khaybar took place, i.e. Year 7 of the Hijri calendar. He remained close to the Prophet, eager to gather knowledge. He asked the Prophet: 'Who will be the happiest of people to earn your intercession on the Day of Judgement?' The Prophet said to him: 'Abu Hurayrah, seeing how keen you are to learn the hadiths, I thought that no one would ask me this question ahead of you'. He was the Prophet's companion who narrated the largest number of his hadiths'. He died in Madinah in Year 58 AH, 678 CE.

#### Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) informs us in this hadith that God has ninety-nine fine names and that whoever learns them all, with their full meanings, and implements what they signify will be in Heaven.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 2736; Muslim, 2677.



# Message and Meaning

This is one of the main hadiths that mention or refer to God's fine names.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) states that God, the Exalted, has ninety-nine names.

Scholars are in agreement that the hadith does not state a total number for the names of God, Mighty and Exalted. The hadith simply mentions that whoever learns these ninety-nine of His names enters Heaven. It is not intended as specifying a total number. God Almighty has countless good names and fine attributes, as mentioned in the Prophet's supplication: 'My Lord, I appeal to you by every name that belongs to You, whether You have applied it to Yourself, or revealed it in Your Book, or taught it to anyone of Your creation, or kept it to Yourself'.<sup>(1)</sup>



These names which the Prophet is referring to in this hadith are 'one hundred minus one', to confirm that the number is intended, so that no listener or reader will be in doubt.



God, Mighty and Exalted, bestows His favour on His servants by making entry of Heaven the reward for learning these names. That is a great favour indeed and a handsome reward. The learning that ensures such entry has several meanings which are evidenced by the Qur'an and Arabic speech. These include memorization, reciting, acting on what they suggest, understanding through the recitation of the Qur'an in full because it includes all these names.

Thus, what is meant by the hadith is that admittance into Heaven is secured for any person who believes in God's ninety-nine names, learns them fully and acts on what they signify and entail. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not specify these names so that people use their minds to understand the Qur'an and the Sunnah, enjoy searching for these names, attaining their goal and increasing their knowledge of God's Book and its meaning. The fact that the Prophet did not state these names in detail is similar to the fact that he did not specify the time when supplication is answered on Friday and the timing of the Night of Power.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) then mentions one of God's great names, which is *al-Witr*, which means 'one, single, odd, etc.' God, Mighty and Exalted, has neither partner nor similar. He loves oneness. Therefore, He prefers good deeds to be in odd numbers. Thus, we have five daily prayers; we perform ablution washing each organ three times, we perform the *ṭawāf* in seven rounds, while the *Tashrīq* days are three, and the heavens and earths are seven each.

1 Related by Ahmad, 4318; Ibn Ḥibbān, 972.



# Implementation

1

Gods bestows His favours on His servants. He tells us what pleases Him when they address Him, saying: 'God has the finest names, so appeal to Him by these'. (7: 180) The Prophet (peace be upon him) says that whoever appeals to God by these names enters Heaven. It does not behove any Muslim of sound mind to neglect these names when he or she realizes that God loves to be appealed to by these names and that He has made admittance into Heaven the reward given to those who appeal to Him by them.

2

Happy is the person who uses his mind, studies God's Book and the Prophet's Sunnah to deduce God's fine names, understands and implements the significance of these names, appeals to Him by them to ensure being admitted into Heaven.

3

One way to gain a proper learning of these names is to mention them in one's supplication. Thus, we need to increase our supplication by God's names and call Him by the names that suit our situation. Thus, we may say, for example: 'my Lord, the Ever-Merciful, grant me Your mercy; my Lord, the Much-Forgiving, forgive me; my Lord who gives everyone their provisions, grant me my provisions, etc.'

4

Another aspect of the proper learning of God's fine names is that one is able to fulfil what is due to them and to conduct one's behaviour on what they impart. For example, proper learning of God's name, the Ever-Merciful, includes that the learner hopes to receive God's mercy and is merciful towards God's creation, so that their Creator will be merciful to him. Proper learning of God's name, the Provider, means that one is absolutely certain that God will give him his provisions. It also means that one loves God for the favour He bestows and one does not seek his provisions through what God has forbidden. All provisions are from Him and He gives without reckoning.





5

If something happens to you, whether a blessing or a calamity, or indeed a matter that requires careful thinking, remember God's fine names and find out which names apply to your situation and then appeal to God using these names. You will then feel comfort and real reassurance.

6

Reflect on the meanings of God's names and consider which of them apply to man such as the Merciful, Generous, Forgiving, Thankful, etc. and try to emulate them in your life. As for those names which apply only to God, such as the All-Great, we should leave those to the One to whom they apply. We should recognize our humility when we reflect on these and fear God.

7

Take the time to reflect, alone or with your family or friends, on one of God's fine names. You should think deeply about it and understand its broad significance, and how it works. Refer to reliable books that explain the meanings of God's fine names, based on what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has explained and what the early leading scholars have illustrated. Never refer to works that are based on mere conjecture.



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